

**Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance**

**Highway Name:** State Highway (SH) 91

**CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:**

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
091A	From SH 24-A North of Leadville North via Fremont Pass and Climax To I 70-A at Copper Mountain

**Highway Location:**

Counties: Lake, Summit  
Length (Miles): 22.342

**OAHP Site Numbers (for previously recorded segments, if applicable)\*:**

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Assessment Date</i>	<i>Site Name</i>
None	No previously recorded segments are found on or adjacent to this highway		

**Discussion of Site Forms (for previously recorded segments, if applicable):**

No Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms for previously recorded segments of this highway were identified in Compass.

**Historic Districts located within 250 feet of highway (OAHP Site Number and Name)\*:**

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>District Name</i>	<i>Assessment (If Applicable)</i>
None	No historic districts are found on or adjacent to this highway	

*\*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHP*

## Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

**Highway Name:** State Highway (SH) 91

### Historical Data:

SH 91 begins at the junction with U.S. Highway (US) 24 just north of Leadville and travels north via Fremont Pass and Climax to Interstate(I)-70 and Copper Mountain exit. The entire extent of the highway is 22.342 miles. SH 91 does not enter the town of Leadville, thus no historic districts are located immediately adjacent to this highway.

Early travel maps show the route of SH 91 traveled from Leadville over Fremont Pass to Dillon. By 1924, the route was marked 91 and extended over Loveland Pass and then east to Georgetown, ending at Empire. By 1936, the segment from Leadville to Climax was paved. In 1939, a change was made to the eastern end and it terminated just east of Empire at US 40. By 1938, maps indicate that the route from Leadville to Empire was marked as U.S. Highway (US) 6. By 1946, the entire route was paved except the summits of Loveland and Fremont passes. By 1941, Vail Pass was complete and maps no longer showed US 6 south from Wheeler Junction (now Copper Mountain) to Leadville (Salek). State travel maps from 1941 show SH 91 marked from Dillon to Leadville but cosigned with US 6 from Wheeler Junction to Dillon. The construction of I-70 in the late 1960s removed most of US 6 from Wheeler Junction to Empire, thus the route was no longer marked US 6 or SH 91 (Salek). The current alignment of SH 91, marked as extending from Copper Mountain to Leadville, dates to 1964.

Beginning with the gold rush that began in 1859, Colorado's mining industry was a significant contributor to the state's economic, political, and social development. This trend continued as the industry expanded with the discovery of silver, copper, lead and zinc in the central mountain region and resulted in population explosions in mining camps and nearby supply centers. Technological advances such as smelting allowed these ores to be more successfully processed and contributed to the increase in mine production. Wagon roads and railroads were essential to the transportation needs of the mining industries and the communities that surrounded them. At times, wagon roads were the only access to in the narrow and steep mountain canyons. Some of these wagon roads and railroad grades later became part of the state highway system. Leadville became an important supply, processing, and transportation hub for the mining industries in the Central Mountain region.

Leadville was a successful mining town beginning in the late 1870s. The discovery of high-grade silver ore created a booming town important in Colorado's mining history. Early prospectors to the area in 1860 and 1861 initially extracted gold. By the mid 1870s, much of the gold was mined. However, the area also contained high-grade silver ore that proved more economic to mine. The construction of a smelter in 1877 created the push the town needed. Silver developed as an important industry that lead to further investments in mining. Leadville's silver boom lasted until the economic depression of 1893 (Abbott 1994 :101-102).

The economic depression of 1893 did not entirely wipe out mining in Leadville. A second gold boom occurred during the late 1890s and the need for other minerals and heavy metals resulted in mining continuing until World War II. For example, molybdenum was discovered near the town of Climax by 1900 but was not mined until 1918 when the Climax Molybdenum Mine Corporation was consolidated. Molybdenum is used to help harden steel, thus was needed during the first World War and the growth of the automobile industry. The Climax mine produced most of the world's Molybdenum and was boosted by high demand and prices until the early 1980s (Fell and Twitty 2005: E-63).

The mining industry required railroads. Leadville was served by a couple of railroads during its boom days, including the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad which arrived from the south in 1880. However, the town also relied on wagon and stage routes for travelers and moving equipment and to convey goods and people from the mines to the railroads. Early survey maps from 1879 to 1881 show the roads along with the railroad grades into the town of Climax and Leadville along the current route of SH 91 such as the Colorado Midland and the Denver Rio Grande (USGS maps and Fell and Twitty 2005: E-20). By the late 1930s and 1940s, most of the railroads stopped operating in this area, and roads became more important to transport mining materials (Fell and Twitty 2005: E-41).

SH 91 connected the town of Leadville to the other mining communities of Climax, Frisco, Georgetown, and Empire until the late 1940s when the routings were changed to US 6 and eventually I-70. The gold and silver mining and later molybdenum industry in the area relied heavily on SH 91 to transport materials and people.

(Unless otherwise indicated, sources used in the preparation of this section included state highway maps, the Highways of Colorado by Matthew Salek, Highways to the Sky: A Context and History of Colorado's Highway System, Colorado State Roads and Highways, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, plans in the Online Transportation Information System (OTIS), and site forms for previously surveyed resources in Compass when available.)

*\*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

**Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance**

**Highway Name:** State Highway (SH) 91

**Not Significant - No historical significance identified**

**Significant - Historical significance identified (see details below)**

**Property Type and Areas of Significance:**

A detailed explanation why this highway possesses historical significance is provided in the Significance Statement below.

**Cultural:**

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)

**Engineering:**

Subtypes

- Farm-to-Market Road
- Limited Access, Multiple-Lane, Divided Highway/Freeway
- Highway Bypass

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)

**Aesthetic:**

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)
- Landscape architecture (Landscape Architecture)

*\*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

## Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

**Highway Name:** State Highway (SH) 91

### Historic periods of highway construction:

- Pre-territorial (pre-1861)
- Territorial and pre-automobile state roads (1861-1890)
- Automobile age (1890-1930)
- Depression and World War II (1930-1945)
- Postwar Interstate Era (1945-1973)
- Completion and Augmentation of Interstate System (1973-2000)

### Level of Significance:

- Local
- State
- National

### Significance Statement:

SH 91 has significance as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS.

#### *Criterion A*

SH 91 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS. Research and literature review indicate that this highway evolved from earlier local roads and subsequently functioned as part of the early state highway system and provided an important connection to transport mining materials to larger markets. The current route is associated with providing a direct connection to transport materials such as silver, lead, and molybdenum. As such, SH 91 possesses significance under Criterion A in the area of Transportation and Industry for its direct and important role in facilitating the development of mining at the state level.

#### *Criterion B*

Research did not reveal this highway to be directly associated with the events or work of a person important in history, nor does research indicate that SH 91 represents the efforts of a specific individual to secure construction of this highway for the economic development of a community or area of the state. Therefore, SH 91 does not possess significance under Criterion B.

#### *Criterion C*

As a representative example, a state highway that exhibits physical features indicative of an important type or subtype identified in the MPS reflecting its original design or important variation may possess significance. A state highway may also possess significance for particularly important engineering achievements.

State Highway 91 is not considered to be an early or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department. Research and literature review yielded no evidence to indicate the use of innovative or important engineering design or construction techniques that serve to distinguish this highway from other roads and does not appear to exhibit important engineering innovations or important later modifications. The highway's design and construction appear to fall within the established standard practices of state highway design and construction of the time and the highway does not possess significance under Criterion C.

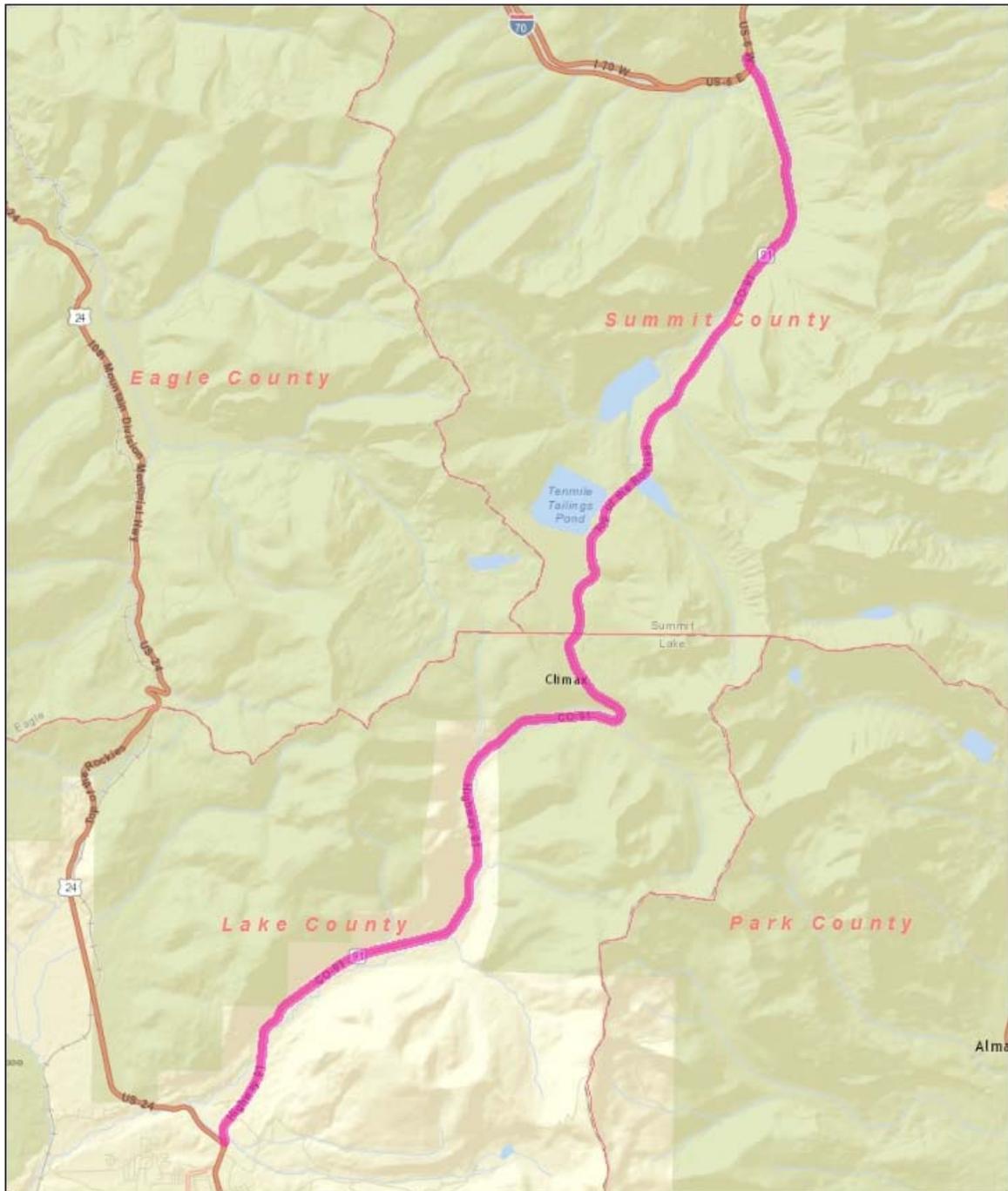
#### *Criterion D*

For a property to possess significance for information potential, the information yielded by the property must answer specific important research questions that cannot be otherwise answered. The technology of highway construction is well understood and documented. As such, this highway is unlikely to yield important information that cannot be discerned from archived plans and other records. Therefore, this highway does not possess significance under Criterion D.

*\*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHF*

# Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

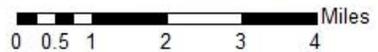
Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 91



Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, P.C., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013



- SH 91
- County Boundary



SH 91



Map indicates the extent of the highway based on CDOT GIS data; portions co-signed with other highways may not be indicated.